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ABSTRACT

This guide deals with issues that should be considered by individuals involved in the education and training of adults. In particular, this document stresses the importance of processes of curricular design and recognition of a core of skills as a basis for learning. The first section discusses recent developments by the Further Education Unit's Board of Management, the DES PICKUP and REPLAN initiatives, the RESTART programme, and the Adult Training Strategy (a national education and training strategy for adults living in the United Kingdom). The second section, which deals with designing curricula, outlines the aims, processes, and content of provision and emphasizes that this approach is as relevant to the part-time recurrent nature of adult learning as it is to full-time programs. Opportunities and access are discussed next. The fourth section discusses some of the major national-level initiatives that are currently underway to reform and coordinate further education and training. The fifth section is devoted to local initiatives to support and coordinate the provision of adult education and training, with particular emphasis on the areas of negotiation, counseling and guidance, assessment, and the design of flexible modes of delivery. (MN)

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Supporting Adult Learning

CE047702

A Discussion Document

Supporting Adult Learning: A curriculum strategy for the development of continuing education/ training for adults

A Discussion Document

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Dear Sir/Madam

SUPPORTING ADULT LEARNING

Enclosed is an FEU document which highlights issues for consideration by those involved in the education and training of adults. The Board of Management is beginning to see the coming together of a discernible national strategy with respect to the education and training of adults, and although much remains to be done we feel it timely to raise awareness with respect to the curricular principles that should underpin such a strategy.

Developments initiated by DES and MSC, especially PICKUP, REPLAN and the Adult Training Strategy, are related to the wider spectrum of provision of education and training for adults and to the question of developing a coherent adult education and training strategy. *Supporting Adult Learning* proposes local responses to a national strategy for adult learning which would include the review of provision and drawing up of local development plans.

In particular the document stresses the importance of the processes of curricular design and a recognition of a core of skills as a basis for learning.

The section on designing curricula for adult learners outlines the aims, processes and content of provision and emphasises that this approach is as relevant to the part-time recurrent nature of adult learning as it is to those who participate in education and training on a full-time basis. Adult further and higher education establishments are currently responding to changing demands from adult learners and a more comprehensive curricular design could provide a structure for the allocation of resources and increasing opportunities for access.

In giving priority to the idea of a core of skills this document underlines the importance of the opportunity, within the range of education and training provision, for adults to acquire basic skills and competences.

The document suggests starting-points for discussion which should help to encourage local authorities and other providers of education and training for adults to engage in the debate and to re-assess the significance of adult learning.

Yours faithfully,

Jack Mansell

JACK MANSELL
Chief Officer

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

i) Against a background of social, economic and technological change, the education/training of adults in the UK remains apparently uncoordinated and receives a relatively low level of national investment (paragraphs 1-4 and 28).

ii) The development of opportunities to meet recurrent learning needs arising from such change should be based on a strategy which emphasises skills and attitudes for learning (paragraphs 5 and 8).

iii) The limited opportunities which most adults have to take part in education and training would be most effectively used if all curricula were designed to include:
   a) the processes of: negotiation and needs analysis; counselling, guidance and assessment; and the accreditation of experience and consideration of relevance (paragraphs 9-17);
   b) a core of skills which forms a basis for learning and includes the areas of: communication, literacy, numeracy, technology, creativity, and planned learning strategies (paragraphs 18-24);
   within programmes responding to learning needs arising in the context of specific adult life-roles (paragraphs 25-26).

iv) The adoption of such a comprehensive curriculum design could provide a more rational basis for the overall allocation of resources and opportunities for access (paragraphs 27-28).

v) Provision for adults should be part of any national strategy aimed at co-ordinating post-school learning opportunities. The means to do this, based on existing programmes, are available to Government, with the support of other national agencies where appropriate (paragraphs 29-34).

vi) Local action in response to such national strategy includes: review of all education/training provision within local areas, and drawing up of local development plans; design and provision of supporting staff development programmes (paragraphs 36-38).

vii) Such a programme of development requires that there should be a high degree of mutual support given by agencies, national and local, involved at successive stages and in complementary activities within the education/training service as a whole (paragraph 35).

viii) There is never any shortage of discussion about the role of continuing education/training. This paper, although intended to generate more discussion, suggests a programme for action. Some of it is under way, other aspects of it will not materialise

until the concept of a national strategy for the continuing education/training of adults is more clearly seen and promoted by all the agencies concerned — and more easily understood by the public at large.

I. A CHANGING SCENE

1. In 1984[1] the FEU Board of Management drew attention to the need for a more coherent approach to the continuing education/training of adults both in and out of employment. Since then we have seen the development of the MSC Adult Training Campaign, a growing awareness of the DES PICKUP and REPLAN initiatives, the RESTART programme and the publication of *Working Together*[2] — a Government statement issued jointly through the Departments of Employment, and Education and Science.

2. Notwithstanding the deficiencies in attitude and investment exposed in *A Challenge to Complacency*[3], the FEU welcomes these developments. They indicate the coming together of a discernible national strategy with respect to the education and training of adults; and although much requires to be done before this strategy is capable of being recognised as applicable to the generality of our adult population, we believe that they may offer a sufficient basis for a wider discussion of implementation.

3. Because of these developments we feel that it is now timely to raise awareness with respect to the curricular principles that should underpin any structural progress towards a national education/training strategy for adults. The basic theme of the Adult Training Strategy (ATS), in making people more aware of the vital necessity of continuing to learn throughout working life, requires relatively little expansion to include those who are outside employment.

4. In addition to the basic message of ATS aimed at those available for work, pre-vocational curricula, by implication at least, provide a necessary foundation for this need to recognise that a positive attitude to learning is essential to working life. Post-work curricula, such as pre-retirement courses, stress the need to remain mentally active and retain the will to learn. One of the more difficult technical curricular problems with which we are faced in education/training is to prove to the majority of adults that they have not stopped learning, even though their experience may be constrained. We have elsewhere[4] developed the theme that supporting vocational change (a wider concept than occupational change) should be central to learning programmes from about the age of 14. In this paper we concentrate on the curricular principles and processes we see necessary to support adults.

5. Change is now recognised as a feature of working life, of leisure, of family and social life, and of education and training. Education/training can most help us to cope with such change if it not only meets

our immediate needs to acquire skills, but also enables us to become better learners. Learning covers a broad range of activities, not all of them organised or intentional. A key aim of education/training should be to provide support for the systematic acquisition of skills and attitudes for successful learning. This paper discusses the special role of education in the promotion of these skills and attitudes.

II. DESIGNING CURRICULA FOR ADULT LEARNERS

6. The impact of change has given rise to new demands in education and training; thinking about the curriculum has been both broadened and refined. Many long-established notions of the curriculum, whether as a grouping of subjects or as the manifestation of a broad philosophy of aims and values, have been found inadequate. A curriculum may be better described as the set of experiences designed to facilitate the acquisition of skills and attitudes for successful learning; the elements which contribute to the achievement of this aim are defined in terms of processes and content. Such an approach to the curriculum is exemplified, for schools, in the DES discussion document *The Curriculum from 5 to 16* (HMSO, 1985), and, for further education, in the curricula proposed by the FEU and others for pre-vocational courses. The messages of this approach have not so obviously been spelt out or applied in relation to adult education/training. For example, 'study skills' in the Access courses are a step in the right direction, but we believe the issue is wider than this.

7. A broader approach to the curriculum is often seen as applicable only to learners who are participating in education or training on a full-time basis. The part-time and intermittent pattern of adult attendance has led to curriculum design for adults being treated solely in terms of response to needs and wants — of employers and employees, of unemployed adults, of men and women seeking a second chance to learn, and so on. Such responsiveness is obviously an essential feature of provision. Taken on its own, however, it may lead to confusion about the role of education/training and to short-sighted and wasteful deployment of resources. Adults have limited opportunities for learning, so it is all the more important that the full range of elements which contribute to successful learning should be considered in the design of education/training programmes. In the paragraphs which follow, an approach to adult learning is outlined in terms of *aims*, *processes* and *content*. If, for example, the greater use of flexible learning with its more open access is not able to transfer the benefits of full-time curriculum philosophy to part-time learners, the design of such curriculum must be flawed.

AIMS

Underpinning skills and attitudes for learning

8. Providing students and trainees with opportunities for the systematic acquistion of skills and attitudes for learning has a number

of overall implications for curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation, whatever the more immediate origins and objectives of particular programmes may be. We suggest that an outcome of all curricular provision should be enhancement on the part of learners of:

— adaptability and flexibility: readiness and understanding required to transfer skills by applying them appropriately in contexts other than those in which they were originally acquired, and to seek further knowledge and skills independently and from new sources;

— assumption of responsibility and the exercise of initiative;

— understanding and acceptance of other individuals and groups leading to the successful exercise of interpersonal skills;

— intellectual skills, including specific study and learning skills, and decision-making and problem-solving skills;

— confidence and motivation.

PROCESSES

Negotiation, needs analysis and marketing

9. To a large extent the range of learning opportunities now available to adults is determined by the existing skills, knowledge, and experience of the providers. This is so not only with academic subjects but also frequently in vocational education and training, where conventional syllabuses and methods often discourage teachers from addressing themselves to learning needs arising in everyday life. To change this situation, more support should be given to institutions and staff to undertake outreach, research and the necessary negotiation which will allow programmes to be more responsive to the needs of learners and communities. This will involve, for example, liaison with local groups and the conduct of surveys. In the provision of vocational education and training, employees as well as managers, employers and examining bodies may need to be consulted. Appropriate methods, times and locations for learning should be determined through such outreach and research.

10. Concepts and methods drawn from the practice of marketing are now being more widely used in the provision of education and training to improve the match between resources and needs[5]. The emphasis is thereby shifted from determination by the provider to determination by the learner (or his/her sponsor), seen as a 'client'. The process draws attention to the need to allocate resources to the investigation of demand and to the development of organisational flexibility.

11. When a content and framework for the provision of a learning programme have been established, the process of negotiation should continue with the prospective learners themselves. This may involve negotiation over methods of delivery and modes of attendance and will certainly require more flexible forms of provision responsive to the varying circumstances of particular client groups such as the unemployed. Learners should be able to make informed choices about the pace and style of their own learning. This may lead to independent or distance learning projects, workshop activities, or collaborative learning in small groups, as well as or instead of teacher-led learning. The FEU hopes that the Open College, once under way, will be seen as an additional dimension to the choices of available delivery methods, and not as a threatening competitor. Negotiation should involve discussion and agreement on the goals of learning, as well as on procedures for monitoring and assessing their achievement. Inadequate negotiation leads to waste of resources, of which the learners' own time and efforts are the most important. Meaningful negotiation requires that each party should understand the other's position. It does not imply any lowering of standards.

12. In the above paragraphs, negotiation has been approached from the learners' point of view. The providers' contribution is made through counselling, guidance and assessment.

Counselling, guidance and assessment

13. These processes enable learners to perceive what opportunities are available to meet their learning needs, and where they stand and what progress they may make in relation to such opportunities. Those who offer counselling and guidance from an educational or training base should be aware of other sources of support to which it may be appropriate to refer the client: for example, careers advice, legal advice, or health counselling. Education and training guidance should be based on a wide range of information about opportunities available. Where resources allow, the provision of guidance may be constituted as an educational specialism in its own right. This should not, however, divert attention from the need to make guidance available at all stages of the learning process, and to ensure that all teachers and trainers see guidance as part of their role, and are given training opportunities to fulfil this role. Practical arrangements to ensure the effectiveness of guidance in relation to personal, vocational and educational needs are suggested in *Towards a Personal Guidance Base* (FEU, 1983). *The Challenge of Change* (UDACE, 1986) puts forward proposals for the development of educational guidance services for adults.

14. Assessment should likewise be seen as a continuous process. Initially it may be an informal process associated with negotiation and

guidance. The advice giving which constitutes this form of assessment should be based on a wide-ranging knowledge of learning opportunities. As a bridge to more specific learning, there are courses and activities designed to enable assessment and self-assessment to be carried out, such as vocational assessment programmes, Wider Opportunities for Women, programmes for the assessment of prior experiential learning. During the process of more specific learning, the function of assessment is to provide feedback to learners to enable them to monitor their own learning. The design of curricular materials to include self-assessment is always helpful. In a successful learning environment feedback is something to be shared between the tutor and learner.

15. Accreditation is the outcome of assessment most frequently sought by learners. Accreditation gives access to opportunities both for progression within the learning system and for employment and self-employment. Accreditation in the form of credentials is often associated with a measure of social status and self-confidence. The form and content of many certificates are often insufficiently descriptive, and not always as positive as they might be in describing what the learner has actually achieved. This is why the FEU has constantly promoted the concept of student profiles[6], capable of describing the competences that a learner has demonstrated. Providers of learning programmes should therefore ensure that sufficient attention is given to the mechanisms and opportunities related to accreditation, both in the general design of curricula and in guidance given to individual learners. The Open College, Open College Federation and NCVQ initiatives may demonstrate ways of achieving greater flexibility in accreditation.

Experience and relevance

16. In supporting the use and accreditation of experiential learning however, we would urge that it be related always to a rounded programme, with its due share of intellectual development[7]. Many adults, including especially those who have had negative experiences of initial education, expect education and training to be difficult, obscure, and irrelevant to everyday life. It may be a first task of teachers and trainers to overcome this blockage to learning. It certainly is their primary task to facilitate the development of a positive attitude towards learning. One of the ways in which they can do this is to indicate to adults that the way in which they are coping with day-to-day change has inevitably involved some learning.

17. Changes to which such learning relates take place largely outside a formal instructional context: at work, in the home, in the community. It is important for designers of learning programmes to relate to and recognise the achievements of unsponsored or informal learning, by

identifying and valuing personal styles, strategies and achievements, which can be drawn on and developed. Learning acquired informally is often equivalent in scope and level to that which is acquired formally, and is therefore properly the object of initial or continuing assessment. Increased scope for the assessment of prior learning is exemplified in various FEU publications[8] and is being increasingly promoted by others. The relevance of learning programmes may also be enhanced by including experiential learning as a recognised element; practical learning based on a range of demands arising in the workplace is very much a message of *Working Together*[2]. Experiential learning will not always be appropriate, but formal learning whether in the classroom, workplace or community venue can be more effective if it is reinforced by its relevance to wider life experience.

CONTENT

A basis for learning

18. Opportunities to acquire a core of skills and competences, to form the basis for the more specialised demands of learning related to adult roles, are, or should be, offered in all school and pre-vocational curricula. However, significant numbers of people do not acquire basic skills early in life, or have lost them, as work for adult literacy over the past ten years has shown. If such skills constitute an essential basis for learning, provision for acquiring or refurbishing them should be available to all. Experience of adult basic education provision in recent years has shown the importance of motivation arising from personal interests, needs and experiences. The development of basic skills should therefore not be treated as the responsibility of basic education specialists alone. All teachers and trainers must be able to offer guidance on the development of basic skills, and should themselves be prepared to adopt methods which are conducive to their development. It is already generally acknowledged that skills of communication, literacy and numeracy are fundamental requirements for purposeful adult life in our kind of society. Originally, however, they were elements of a curriculum which did not give priority to providing a basis for continuing learning in a context of rapid social and economic change. In new circumstances, the definition of these basic skills needs to be broadened, and their range increased to include skills and awareness associated with technology, creativity, and the process of learning itself.

Communication

19. Adult education and training agencies at present offer some provision to meet the obvious and urgent learning needs of those for whom English is a second language. In the teaching of foreign languages, attention is shifting from literacy skills towards

communication skills. Such provision may help to solve the immediate problems of coping and survival. Beyond this level, however, the basis for communication is an understanding of other people's perspectives, attitudes and values. Successful communication requires, among individuals, interpersonal skills, and, for interaction with groups and organisations, knowledge of structures, normal procedures and recognised strategies. Social, economic and political awareness (including multicultural awareness) are preconditions for resolving by communication and negotiation the conflict of interests which inevitably arises from change.

Literacy

20. The adult literacy campaign has had considerable success in drawing public attention to the disadvantage of not being able to read and to the possibility of acquiring and improving reading and writing skills during adulthood. The possession of basic literacy skills does not alone, however, confer a capacity for full and active participation in adult life. The acquisition of knowledge is an active, not merely a passive, process. Information-seeking skills are required for the pursuit of personal, vocational and educational interests, and increasingly these include a requirement for a degree of computer literacy. Progress in learning at a greater depth and progression within formal education and training are facilitated by the development of study skills. These skills will be of even greater importance as independent learning and open learning become major vehicles for the delivery of education and training.

Numeracy

21. The Advisory Council for Adult Continuing Education worked in association with the Cockroft Committee in carrying out the investigation on which it based the report *Adults' Mathematical Ability and Performance* (ACACE, 1982). The investigation found that about three adults out of ten do not possess the basic skills to handle simple multiplication, percentages, graphs, subtraction or division. Less than half of those questioned showed a correct understanding of the meaning of the rate of inflation. For basic numeracy, as for basic literacy, it is relatively easy to develop and offer programmes which cater for lack of elementary skills. It should also be recognised that quantitative methods and data mediate to a very large extent our understanding of the social, economic, political and scientific world in which we live; notions of number and magnitude are essential tools for thinking and making rational decisions. These notions and confidence in handling them can seldom be developed as a matter of separate provision, and frequently need to be given special attention in a wide range of contexts.

Technology

22. Some attention is already given in the provision of adult education and training to the means by which we satisfy everyday practical requirements: growing plants, preparing food, making clothes, repairing houses and furniture, maintaining vehicles and machines. Such skills and awareness are more effectively applied when they are based on understanding as well as, or rather than, procedure by rote. The replacement of mechanical by automatic control and operation in industry and in the home increases the need for understanding, since faults arise which cannot be seen and physically repaired. A major factor accounting for the higher productivity of West German industry than of comparable British industry was recently found to be that West German workers had a better understanding of the equipment with which they were working, and therefore wasted less time over fault-finding and repairs (see *Productivity, Machinery and Skills in a Sample of British and German Manufacturing Plants* National Institute Economic Review, February 1985). New technology is being introduced rapidly and is changing many aspects of the lives of all of us. The way to cope with and benefit from this technology is to develop attitudes, formed in conjunction with practical approaches, which encourage a desire to understand it, rather than merely to use it. This process is supported by the adoption of methods of training and assessment which aim to develop competence as well as successful performance[9].

Creativity

23. Although personal development is usually seen as a major aim of education, the routine pressures of everyday life discourage many of us from making use of our creative capacity. Modern technology is eliminating the need for a large passive work-force. Much successful industrial production requires that workers should play a more active role and take initiative. It may be hoped that the conditions for personal development at work may become increasingly like those for personal development in the home, in the community, and in leisure. However that may be — and it is difficult to envisage the entire elimination of monotonous and uninteresting jobs — satisfaction of the creative drive is widely thought to be one of the most powerful motivators of human beings. A frustrated society is not a good or healthy society. Education and training has an important role to play in making people aware of possibilities for self-development: in management and organisation, in design, in craft, in home-making, in music, art, dance and drama, for example. There are many opportunities to engage in creative activities outside formal learning programmes; the role of education and training is primarily to raise awareness, to develop confidence, and to offer basic skills in this area.

Learning skills

24. To a great extent the skills and awareness outlined above constitute a basis for learning, and present education and training provision attempts to develop most of them. And yet there are many people who emerge with little confidence in their ability to learn, and others whose learning strategies are patently inefficient. As the focus switches from teaching to learning, attempts must be made to help learners to gain awareness and understanding of different valid learning strategies and of the characteristics of their own preferred learning styles[10]. This may entail simple schemes for analysing the learning requirements associated with everyday tasks, such as those described in *How do I Learn?* (FEU, 1981). In other schemes, learning is approached on the basis of an identification of thinking processes leading to the adoption of appropriate intellectual strategies, such as: analysing the basis for classification; comparing and contrasting; brain-storming; and reviewing. Nowadays the need to learn is experienced by a larger proportion of the population over a greater span of their lives and with reference to a wider range of their experience. In these circumstances we should expect to move towards a better understanding of learning, not only on the part of teachers but of learners themselves.

Role-related learning

25. For children and young adults the role of learner is accepted as normal, and participation in formal learning is expected to be a major occupation. Adults, of course, continue to learn, in family life and leisure, at work, through radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books. But participation in education is far from being a universal adult activity. Adults who participate in education and training usually do so to meet learning needs arising in specific life roles. Most provision of education and training for adults is made with some recognition that the learning involved is related to such roles. The education of adults thus differs from that of children: it addresses itself to needs and purposes largely determined by factors external to educational criteria. This may endanger the quality of learning, as noted above (paragraph 7); but it facilitates learning in so far as it relates it to context and motivation.

26. As the FEU Statement on the Provision of Education and Training for Adults (FEU, 1984) pointed out, the content of learning programmes is and should be largely related to learning needs arising in everyday life, which may be analysed and illustrated by giving attention to the following major areas:

— Life-cycle roles: Parent education, return to study, New Opportunities for Women, preparation for retirement, health in retirement.

— Community roles: Welfare, legal rights and equal opportunities courses, training for magistrates, school governors, voluntary workers, prison education.

— Work roles: This area covers a very wide range of programmes for work-seekers, for the employed, the self-employed, and the unemployed.

— Special needs: Often in consultation with social services departments or the health service, education is provided for those who are handicapped, disabled or ill. This may be general as a form of therapy or directly related to the special needs involved.

III. OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESS

27. Present provision of support for adults comprises a most confusing mixture of opportunities, not all of which are consistent. For example, in terms of financial support the following appear to comprise the major categories :

(i) Paid leave or training allowances: in-service and in-company training and sabbaticals provided by employers, especially for employees in professional grades and larger firms; mandatory or discretionary grants (usually means-tested) for certain courses in HE; MSC training allowances for unemployed adults on some short-course programmes; retraining allowances for those made redundant in industries to which particular agreements apply.

(ii) Provision for which no fee is charged: much adult basic education; MSC 'fees only' programmes, and other special and general provision of part-time education/training for unemployed adults, subject to DHSS rules; special provision and access to general provision for a variety of groups on low incomes, including often the retired and those with special needs.

(iii) Subsidised provision: many vocational and examination courses, and non-vocational courses in some areas; Open University students and 'home' students on HE courses who do not qualify for a grant. A recent tendency in some LEAs has been for the 'self-financing' of non-vocational courses to include direct tuition costs and some overheads.

(iv) Provision based on the self-financing principle: the private sector for leisure and vocational courses; the provision of some kind of short courses, e.g. PICKUP by the maintained sector. (Very little provision is truly self-financing or profitable by commerical criteria.)

Some of the chief sources of anomalies are: the dependence of entitlement to such financial support on where one happens to live (and, in some cases, how long one has been living there); and the designations and perceptions of courses as 'full-time', 'part-time', 'examination', 'recreational', 'approved', 'non-approved', etc. As a result, the groups whose access to the present limited range of education and training is given most support include a number whose competence as learners is already well developed, as well as selected categories of the socially and educationally disadvantaged.

28. It appears to many providers working in adult education and

training that opportunities for learning are restricted as a consequence of a long standing indifference towards the value of adult learning. The real situation is confusing and uncertain, with some areas and some client groups gaining while others lose out. There is evidence that, on a comparative basis, a low proportion of overall resources is given to adult education and training in the UK. In absolute terms, however, public expenditure is quite substantial: the European Social Fund and the MSC Adult Training Programme (which now includes open learning) both offer more funding than comes from local education authority expenditure in this area. The Open University, too, receives significant public funds. Marginal additional support is available through such programmes as Urban Aid, PICKUP and REPLAN. These resources would be deployed more effectively if they were seen to be allocated within the framework of a coherent education/training strategy. This would also enable providers to collaborate more efficiently at local level, and the public to identify the provision best suited to meet learning needs.

IV. CONFIRMING A NATIONAL STRATEGY

29. We have already indicated in the opening paragraphs of this paper that some progress is being made towards the creation of a coherent adult education/training strategy. To be effective, such a strategy should be based on a unifying set of curricular principles. This paper is seeking to outline what these principles should be, and to argue the case for their validity across a wide range of adult education/training. At present there is a lack of clearly identified responsibility for the development, testing and dissemination of good practice based on such principles. The review and development role of various central agencies is recognised in a number of special programmes and initiatives: ALBSU, UDACE, REPLAN, PICKUP, Open Tech, the Adult Training Strategy Branch of MSC. Implementation of a more coherent strategy should draw on the experience of these diverse initiatives, and promote the harmonisation and rationalisation of their activities.

30. Research commissioned by the FEU has shown a continuing paucity of data on national investment and participation in adult education and training. There can be no coherent strategy without continuous monitoring and evaluation, based on comparable and valid data. Such monitoring and evaluation must encourage the interrelationship between training and further, higher and adult education with respect to curriculum, clientele and the changing nature of employment.

31. Major initiatives are now under way to reform and harmonise school examinations through the GCSE, the accreditation of training through the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, and pre-vocational further education through the CPVE. None of these initiatives, however, gives priority to curriculum design to meet the needs of adult learners. The themes of second chance, progression and access are crucial in the curriculum for adults. Courses offered on a modular basis, support for flexible and distance learning, credit transfer, and the accreditation of prior experiential learning are all key elements. Both the mapping of routes to qualification[11] and the development of support for staff in relation to these are areas to which action at national level could give a stronger impetus.

32. For VAT purposes the provision of further education and training is regarded as potentially a business activity in an area of consumer expenditure. The Department of Education and Science is at present investigating the question of tax concessions for adults who pay fees

for courses of education and training. A sub-committee of the Manpower Services Commission is examining the whole area of funding and incentives. Clearly there is some scope for fiscal measures to provide additional incentives for adult learning, which should be regarded as investment rather than consumption[12].

33. The perception of learning as a lifelong process will be encouraged if discrimination between learners on grounds of age is minimised. The operation of regulations affecting the attendance of adults in school and college classes and of children in adult classes tends to have become more flexible in recent years, and productive partnerships have developed. Much entitlement to free education, however, ceases at the age of 18; such discrimination may be inconsistent with the messages about continuity of learning which a supportive strategy would be seeking to promote.

34. A current draft DES circular *Providing for Quality*[13], although concerned with post-14 education, calls on local education authorities to submit plans or schemes for future provision, but does not relate sufficiently well to adult education/training. A revised circular should repair this omission and relate to the roles of the central agencies in this area. This may require an acknowledgement that the level and distribution of financial support should be seen to support an improvement in the quality and coherence of the service and the achievement of wider access to adult learning opportunities.

35. We acknowledge that the Government is giving increasing support to College Employer Links Projects and to PICKUP Local Collaborative Projects. Either through such special initiatives or through Education Support Grants, local policies for review and co-ordination of the education and training of adults could be more actively promoted. Through Circular 6/86 (GRIST), the DES is encouraging the development of in-service training. This should be extended specifically to meet staff development necessary to implement a more coherent strategy for adult education/training.

36. Implementation of a national policy requires the support of a variety of other agencies. Bodies such as the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education and the FEU have review and development roles. The MSC is a major provider of courses and learning opportunities. Schools and further and higher education strongly influence attitudes to adult learning. Employers, voluntary organisations and the public provide support and become involved. The contribution of all of these will be enhanced if the role which each has to play in promotion of policy and in relation to each other is more clearly defined within the framework of a national strategy.

V. LOCAL ACTION

37. Government confirmation that an overall strategy is being developed, via implementation of measures such as those outlined above, would set in motion an extensive review by local education authorities of their own provision and of its relationship to that of other agencies. (LEAs are already faced with a similar kind of exercise in drawing up development plans for NAFE.) There is evidence from the activities of local mapping projects and educational information and guidance services that such a review can lead to an enhancement of opportunities for learning if it leads to greater knowledge of and flexibility in existing provision and its relationship to other relevant activities. On the basis of review and planning, decisions will obviously have to be made about the allocation of resources but this paper has stressed that the educational rationale must also be made clear. Too frequently local reorganisation is undertaken with no clear educational aims, and the resulting service is poorer and less efficient than that which it has replaced.

38. It has been suggested above that support for staff is an essential requirement for success in such a process. The FEU practitioners' manual, *Curriculum Development in the Education of Adults* (FEU, 1984), gives guidance on a systematic approach and good practice. The curriculum perspective offered above (paragraphs 8-26) implies that training opportunities should be designed to meet the needs of staff working in this area over a broader range of skills and awareness than is covered by most staff development programmes provided at present.

39. This paper identifies a number of specific priority areas for staff development policies and programmes, including the skills of:

(i) negotiation — in relation to both the practice of outreach and marketing, and the interpersonal skills required by teachers, lecturers and trainers who are not used to teaching adults;

(ii) counselling and guidance;

(iii) assessment — initial assessment of prior learning, formative assessment, and assessment for accreditation and progression;

(iv) the design of flexible modes of delivery: modular courses and learning in open, self-help, and distance modes.

40. Properly designed programmes and policies for staff development and support will provide opportunities and incentives for staff to channel the commitment present in individual agencies within a collective endeavour.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. *A Larger Perspective Required: Provision of Education and Training for Adults* FEU, 1984.
2. *Working Together — Education and Training* Cmnd 9823, HMSO, July 1986.
3. *A Challenge to Complacency — Changing Attitudes to Training* MSC/NEDO, November 1985.
4. *Supporting Vocational Change* FEU, 1987.
5. In support of marketing education and training, the FEU has published *Marketing FE — A Feasibility Study* (FEU, 1985), and has supported the publication of *Employers Training Requirements — An FEU/PICKUP Database Project* (Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic Products Limited, 1985) and *Marketing Further and Higher Education — A Handbook* (Longman for FEU/FESC, 1985).
6. See *Profiles* (Longman for FEU, 1982), *Profiles in Action* (Longman for FEU, 1984).
7. See *Stretching the Mind* (FEU, to be published 1987).
8. See, for example, *Exploiting Experience* (FEU, 1984) and *Assessing Experiential Learning* (Longman for FEU, 1987).
9. See *Towards a Competence-based System* (FEU, 1984).
10. See Robert M. Smith: *Learning How to Learn — Applied Theory for Adults* (Open University Press, 1983).
11. See *A Challenge to Complacency* Cooper & Lybrand Associates (MSC/NEDO, 1985) p. 41.
12. See *A Challenge to Complacency*, ibid.
13. Issued by DES in August 1986.

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Objectives

The objects for which **The Further Education Unit (FEU)** *is established are to promote, encourage and develop the efficient provision of further education in the United Kingdom and for that purpose:*
a) to review and evaluate the range of existing further education curricula and programmes and to identify overlap, duplication, deficiencies and inconsistencies therein;
b) to determine priorities for action to improve the provision of further education and to make recommendations as to how such improvements can be effected;
c) to carry out studies in further education and to support investigations of and experimentation in, and the development of further education curricula and to contribute to and assist in the evaluation of initiatives in further education;
d) to disseminate and publish information and to assist in the dissemination and publication of information about recommendations for and experiments and developments in further education.

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